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REAGAN ORDERS COMPLETE COOPERATION IN IRAN ARMS PROBE
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The White House today ordered all staff members to cooperate fully with investigators probing the Iran arms scandal, including preservation of any pertinent written records. Word of the directive came as President Reagan remained secluded at his mountaintop ranch. His aides brushed aside reporters' questions about the secret funneling of profits from the Iran arms sales to U.S.-backed Nicaraguan rebels. In Washington, a House Judiciary subcommittee stepped up pressure for appointment of a Watergate-style investigator by issuing a report saying it was possible Vice President George Bush and other top White House officials had broken laws in connection with the Iran-rebels operation. Presidential spokesman Dan Howard said the new White House memorandum, instructing everyone to cooperate in two inquiries being run separately by the Justice Department and a special review board, was being circulated today. "It tells all White House and National Security staff to cooperate fully and to preserve any and all records, telephone logs, whatever," Howard said. News reports, on which the White House refused comment, have alleged that some potentially important documents on the money-skimming aspect of the Iran arms deal had already been destroyed by Lt. Col. Oliver North, a National Security Council (NSC) aide fired Tuesday when the scandal surfaced. Howard said the memo, prepared by White House counsel Peter Wallison, was intended "simply to assure staff they have instructions to cooperate with both investigations" -- by Attorney General Edwin Meese and a panel charged with investigating the conduct of the NSC. "The attorney general has a blank check to do whatever is necessary to complete his investigation," Howard said. "It is in everybody's interest to get to the bottom of this and get it out as soon as possible." In Washington, the question of whether Bush and other top officials might have been criminally involved in the Iran deal was raised by the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime. In a letter and a report to Meese, the panel said it was not making any accusations but that allegations in the press and elsewhere were enough to warrant appointment of an independent special prosecutor to investigate the whole affair. "Officials alleged to be involved in the possible criminal conduct range from embassy and military personnel in Central America to the highest levels in the White House," subcommittee chairman John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, said. The report listed Meese himself, Bush, White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan, CIA Director William Casey, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams as top officials who might have broken laws against misuse of public funds, property or records in the sending of Iran arms-sales funds to Nicaraguan contra rebels. At the State Department, an official said the administration was considering flying a high-level emissary to the Middle East to explain U.S. policy in light of the controversy that followed the Iran arms revelations.

But he stressed that no decision had yet been made on this. In Santa Barbara, where Reagan was spending the Thanksgiving holiday out of public view, Howard repeated Chief of Staff Regan's denial of reports that North had told him about the secret diversion of Iran arms proceeds into Swiss bank accounts held by the contras. "If anybody thinks they've got anything, have them take it to Justice," Howard quoted Regan -- who was said to be playing golf -- as saying today. "His reaction is a flat denial." Otherwise, the White House ignored press questions on the gravest political scandal of Reagan's six-year presidency. "The whole matter is in the hands of professional investigators where it should be," Howard said. "It would be improper for us to comment." The president and Meese said on Tuesday they had just discovered that up to \$30

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million in profits from the Iran arms deal -- highly controversial by itself -- had been channeled to the contras earlier this year at a time when such covert U.S. aid was forbidden by law. National Security Adviser John Poindexter resigned and his aide, North, was fired following this discovery. Meese said they were the only high government officials with any knowledge of the diverted-funds affair. Justice Department spokesman Patrick Korten today quoted Meese as saying "he has no reason to change the statement he made at the White House briefing" on Tuesday on North and Poindexter being the only ones who knew about the transfer. Among the reports on which the White House refused comment was a West German item saying Robert McFarlane, who preceded Poindexter as NSC adviser, phoned the president from Tehran last May during a clandestine trip made at Reagan's behest. That trip climaxed the secret operation that underpinned the whole current controversy: an 18-month U.S. effort to improve relations with "moderate" elements in revolutionary Moslem-run Iran and win freedom for U.S. hostages in Lebanon. As part of that effort, Reagan has disclosed he approved the secret sale of some defensive weapons and military spare parts to Iran, which held 52 American hostages from 1979 to 1981 and which is under an official U.S. arms embargo. White House spokesmen also refused to discuss directly reports that North had destroyed vital files on the Iran-contra deal while Meese was investigating last weekend. Regan, however, has said that if the documents were national security papers there would be copies in other files. Reporters have had no briefings on the Iran issue since Reagan and Meese made their stunning disclosures at the White House on Tuesday. None were currently planned, officials said. The press has no access to the president, who is secluded at his 688-acre Rancho del Cielo, 25 miles from Santa Barbara. A brief written statement from the White House each morning describes Reagan's typical day of horseback riding, brush-clearing and wood-chopping. He usually receives a telephone briefing from his senior aides in Santa Barbara.